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THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND

Singing Class Circular,

Published on the 1st of every Month.

No. 79.—Vol. 4.

DECEMBER 1, 1850.

{ Price 1½d.
Stamped, 2½d.

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THE PREFACE.

If ever Preface was especially needful, it is surely so in the present instance, to state an explanatory word concerning the design of the work, and an exculpatory word touching the choice of its subject.

The design has been, to trace the probable antecedents in the history of some of Shakespeare's women ; to imagine the possible circumstances and influences of scene, event, and associate, surrounding the infant life of his heroines, which might have conducted to originate and foster those germs of character recognized in their maturity, as by him developed ; to conjecture what might have been the first imperfect dawns of that which he has shown us in the meridian blaze of perfection : and it was believed that such a design would combine much matter of interesting speculation, afford scope for pleasant fancy, and be productive of entertainment in the various narratives.

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If it be borne in mind that all *climax* in incident and sentiment was to be carefully avoided throughout these stories,—inasmuch as they are merely preliminaries to catastrophes already ordained,—the obstacles in the way of giving them startling features of romance will be understood. The aim has been to invent such adventures as might be supposed to colour the future lives ; to place the heroines in such positions as should naturally lead up to, and account for, the known conclusion of their subsequent confirmed character and after-fate ; in short, to invest each story with consistent and *appropriate* interest.

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